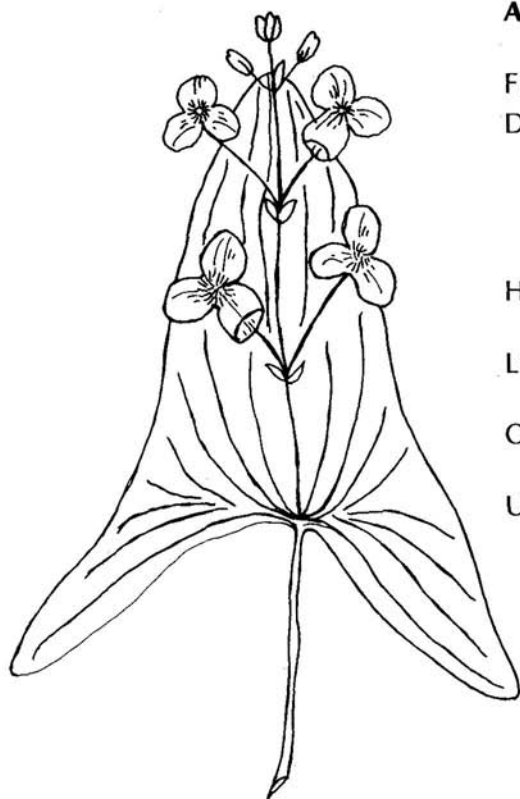


white-flowering edibles



ARROWHEAD (*Sagittaria* ...
various species)

FLOWERS: May - October

DESCRIPTION: Water plant
with erect, arrow-
shaped leaves. Belongs
to the Water Plantain
Family.

HABITAT: Shallow water,
edges of ponds

LOCATION: Scattered state-
wide

COLLECTION: August -
November

USES: Vegetables

1

Arrowhead is an attractive plant growing on the border of one of the ponds at our farm. The arrowhead leaves are distinctive, as are the attractive flowers.

The food source from arrowhead is a potato-like tuber that produces in the autumn. One reading source indicated that the Indians harvested the arrowhead, or duck potato, by slushing around the pond with their bare feet. Once the foot felt a tuber, it was knocked loose and picked. The tubers, which can become an inch or two wide, are located several feet from the plant itself. While most of the tubers are smaller, they all contain a bad tasting, whitish-colored juice when eaten raw.

One way to prepare this potato substitute is to bake it in a 350-degree oven for 30 minutes. They may also be boiled or roasted around a campfire. Fernald reports that one Indian tribe used the tubers all winter by stringing them up to dry.

YUCCA (*Yucca smalliana*)

FLOWERS: May - July

DESCRIPTION: Long, narrow leaves are tough and sharp, growing two feet long from a basal rosette. Tall flower stalks bear cream or white flowers. Member of Lily Family.

HABITAT: Scattered from gardens along roadside, railroads, open banks, open woods

LOCATION: Scattered sparingly

COLLECTION: May - August

USES: Salad, fritter, vegetable



My side garden has a couple of yucca plants which have provided enough food for my experiments.

The flower petals are very acceptable in a salad and especially pretty when used with rose and violet petals. I use a sweetened mayonnaise dressing thinned with a fruit juice on this salad.

The flowers make a reasonably good fritter when dipped in a batter of 1 cup flour, 1 t baking powder, $\frac{1}{2}$ t salt, 1 cup milk, 1 egg, $\frac{1}{4}$ cup corn oil and fried.

The yucca pods of some species are edible and supposedly quite delicious. Our common yucca of Missouri is indeed not a delicacy, or, that is to say, I have not developed a taste for it. The roasted pods, while edible, are bitter. I also roasted the pods, scraped out the seeds into a batter and fried that. All attempts at boiling, roasting, camouflaging or frying were unsuccessful.

If I were hungry or lost and located some yucca, I would eat them again. Until then, however, they will remain on an emergency-food-only basis.



FALSE SOLOMON'S SEAL

(Smilacina racemosa)

FLOWERS: May - June

DESCRIPTION: Bending stalk; alternate, parallel-veined leaves; flowers cluster on stem end.
Member of Lily Family.

HABITAT: Rich woodland

LOCATION: Statewide

COLLECTION: Late March - early May. Mid-summer for berries

USES: Vegetable, berry

3

CAUTION: The fresh berries act as a purgative.

The young shoots of false Solomon's seal and true Solomon's seal are close as look-alikes, grow in the same areas and are interchangeable as an asparagus vegetable. Cut off the young shoots, cook for five minutes in boiling water and serve with butter. It may be fancied up by using in a casserole.

Indian tribes used the rootstalks as a potato after soaking them in lye water and boiling until tender.

False Solomon's seal has a flower cluster at the top of the stem while the true species has flowers at each spot where the leaf attaches to the stem. The young shoots are differentiated by the true Solomon's seal having more nerve veins in the leaves — a help when gathering plants prior to blooming.

The berries, which are white when unripe, turn a reddish-purple splotched when ripe. The berries may be eaten raw. Taken either with other fruit or honey, they aid in problems of constipation. If you are a camper who is affected by this situation, a mid-summer hike in pursuit of false Solomon's seal berries might be an effective remedy.

SOLOMON'S SEAL (*Polygonatum canaliculatum*)

FLOWERS: May - June

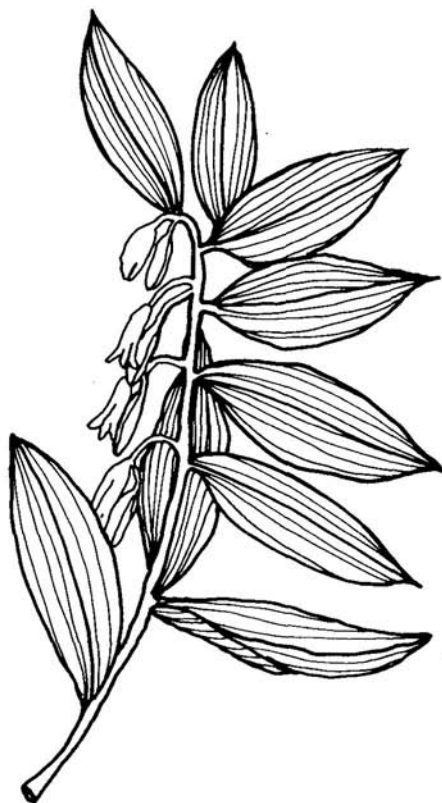
DESCRIPTION: Arched stem bearing alternate, parallel-veined leaves. Leaf base clasps stem. 2-10 flowers dangle from attachment at leaf. Member of Lily Family.

HABITAT: Along stream, roadsides, railroads, rich shaded, rocky woods

LOCATION: Statewide

COLLECTION: Spring

USES: Vegetable



Solomon's seal is a beautiful plant. Most of the plants I've seen are approximately 2½ feet tall. While camping with Cadet Scouts at Greensfelder Park I located a fat-stemmed stalk that was five feet tall and in bloom! The cute dangling flowers hang under the leaves.

The young shoots should be boiled in a small amount of water, steamed for three minutes and served with butter. While the plant is good, I believe I prefer seeing it to eating it.

The rootstalk of Solomon's seal can be dried and made into a flour substitute. The rootstalk has large circular scars which identify and distinguish it from the similar and poisonous rootstalk of the mayapple.

What an interesting history of uses follow this plant! It is reputed to correct all kinds of female problems, serve as a soothing bath for poison ivy itch and as a poultice for external infections and wounds.



SMARTWEED (*Polygonum hydropiper*)

FLOWERS: May - November

DESCRIPTION: Thickened joint at leaf attachment, surrounded with a wrap. Leaves are elliptical, alternate, smooth. Member of Buckwheat Family.

HABITAT: Fields, pastures, moist ground of stream

LOCATION: Scattered statewide

COLLECTION: April - November

USES: Pepper substitute

5

CAUTION: See page 216

After reading that smartweed had peppery leaves, I collected the leaves of the pink-flowering varieties. I found them all but without a pepper taste. I later discovered the white flowering smartweed had a very peppery flavor. The leaves may be used fresh or dried as a substitute for pepper.

POKEWEED (*Phytolacca americana*)

FLOWERS: May - October

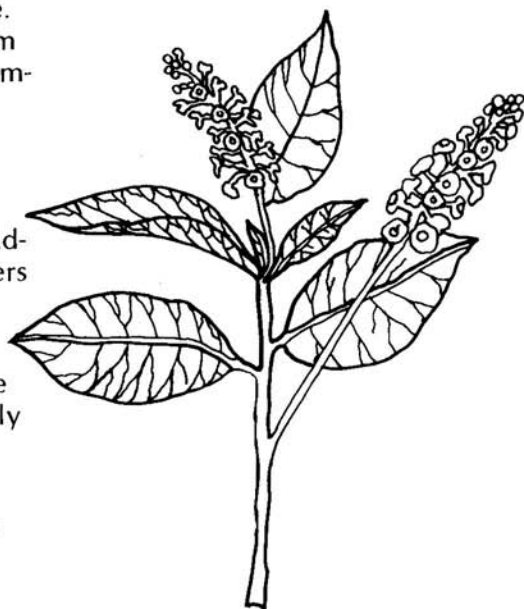
DESCRIPTION: Leaves are large, pointed tip, alternate. Thick stems become purple with age. Flower cluster on stem opposite the leaf. Member of Pokeweed Family.

HABITAT: Waste ground, farm lots, thickets, around dwellings, roadsides, railroads, borders of woods

LOCATION: Statewide

COLLECTION: April - June for greens; berries only when ripe in August until frost.

USES: Potherb, vegetable, pickle, coloring



CAUTION: See page 216

A friend of mine who lived in the South corrected me one day when I was telling him about pokeweed. "You mean poke salat" (pronounced sallat). I must agree, it is a better name.

Early spring finds many a forager out combing the hillsides for poke, dock, dandelions, mustard, peppergrass, lamb's quarters or whatever the favorite greens combination might be. Poke is generally the main bulk of the pot as it is tasty although not strong-flavored. It is good by itself or mixed with the others.

The large root, which is poisonous and not edible, works over-time keeping a supply of poke above ground. When you locate your poke patch, cut the shoots off near the ground, return a few days later for another batch. There are those who grow poke in a basement hotbed to provide this vegetable for year round use. I freeze the poke stems after blanching for my winter's use. However, I must admit I do not care for the frozen variety as those I've put up do not begin to approach the fresh source in taste.

The uses of poke are varied. As a green, it should be thoroughly cooked in two waters. Eaten raw, it will make you sick! The shoots when young are an excellent vegetable served as asparagus or cut in small rounds, rolled in corn meal, and fried like okra. My family is enthusiastic about the poke stem okra. For another dish, peel off the outer, fibrous layer of the stem and cut in 3 or 4 inch sections. Boil in salted water and serve with a pat of oleo. Presto! You have poke stems asparagus style.

The stems of the poke are a part of my dill crock. The stems must be peeled and rid of the outer rind which is bitter and tough. I layer the poke stems on dill, onion, garlic, hot peppers and wild grape leaves, separating this vegetable from the other pickling edibles. The brine is one part salt, $\frac{1}{2}$ part vinegar and ten parts water. After allowing the mixture to set and ferment for a couple of weeks, pack into sterilized jars and seal.

I find one caution advisable to follow when preparing poke stems. Old timers say that when the stems begin to purple, the root's poison is going up the stem. Therefore, I use the stems that are green with very little purple coloring on them. An overdose of poke is a sure laxative. It is a good idea to cook poke in at least two waters to help rid the greens of any toxic substances.

A worthy meal can be made with poke and a cheese sauce to which green peppers and hard-boiled eggs have been added. Cook your poke in the two waters recommended earlier for five or ten minutes each. In a greased casserole put some poke, layer with sliced hard-boiled eggs and green pepper, poke layer, egg/green pepper layer and end with the poke. Make your cheese sauce by blending 6 T flour into 6 T melted oleo. Add 2 cups hot milk, add salt and pepper to taste. Stir in 1 cup grated cheddar cheese and pour over your layered casserole. Bake for 30 minutes at 350 degrees. I expect this to be tried again and again!!

As a spinach-nutmeg vegetable, poke is delicious. Cook your poke in two waters. Melt a couple of tablespoons of butter and saute some minced onion. Blend in $1\frac{1}{2}$ T corn starch in a cup of milk and add $\frac{1}{4}$ t nutmeg. Simmer with the poke and season with salt and pepper. This should take about five minutes. Add $\frac{1}{4}$ cup

of cream, allow it to start to boil, remove from the heat and serve hot. I must say this is yummy, but I must also admit that two out of three times I had stomach cramps and bathroom problems following this dish. Could I have eaten too much? Consider yourself warned!

The ripe berries of poke were used by the Portuguese to give a darker color to their Red Port Wine. However, it also gave a disagreeable flavor to the wine. As a result, by order of the King, poke was cut before the berries formed. The green berries are reported poisonous. The ripe ones, therefore, I've used cautiously in jelly and as a food coloring for a cake icing. While I've had no ill effects, I suggest that one be aware that there is reason to be leery of this; there is a slightly bitter, disagreeable quality that lingers after the initial sweet taste disappears. Go sparingly of this fruit of the pokeweed .. I mean, poke salat!





SPRING BEAUTY (*Claytonia virginica*)

FLOWERS: February - May

DESCRIPTION: Grass-like leaves, purplish cast and green. Terminal flower with seed pods left on stem, result of old blooms. Purslane Family.

HABITAT: Meadows, wooded areas, hillsides rocky ledges

LOCATION: Statewide

COLLECTION: February - May

USES: Vegetable, salad, potherb

9

One of the first spring wildflowers to show its five pale, pink-tinged petals is the spring beauty. This well-named plant provides a bounty of beauty in the woods as well as in open areas and yards. The early leaves are purplish and green and may be eaten raw in a tossed salad. Later, the leaves may be boiled in salted water and served with butter or lemon juice as a potherb.

The "fairy spud" is a tuber growing about three or four inches below ground. They range in size from $\frac{1}{4}$ inch to two inches and grow in unusual shapes. They are enclosed in a jacket somewhat like our potato, only smaller. Hence the name "fairy spuds."

These small potato-like tubers are prepared in a variety of ways, as you would any potato. My first experience was to boil the tubers for ten minutes, pop off the outer jacket and douse in butter. I was very disappointed in the musty taste and smell. My family really turned up their noses at this dish. Therefore, the rest of my efforts were geared to a single serving. Unless you find a rich, humus hillside, fairy spuds are difficult to gather in quantities, so small servings were to my liking. The small potato is good fried in oil with salt and pepper.

Since fields of spring beauty can be easily located, I've included this wilding in my spring camping menu. Students have eagerly dug up the underground treasure in a true spirit of pioneer adventure, but the amount *not* consumed would indicate that less active pioneer taste buds exist!

Personally, I have grown more fond of the tuber the more I've experimented with it. Nonetheless, it is a food source I will use as a camping novelty or in hunger emergencies, not as a vegetable choice.

CHICKWEED (*Stellaria*)

FLOWERS: January -
December

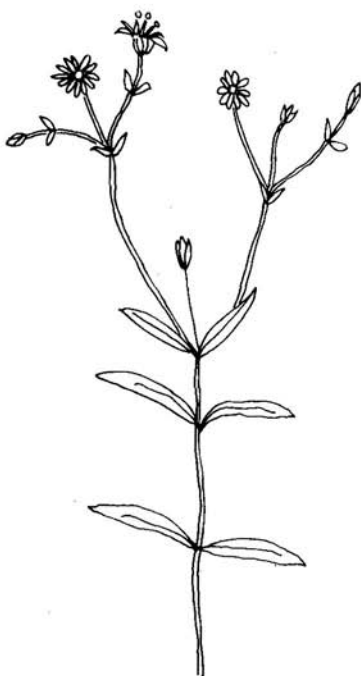
DESCRIPTION: Small
flower. Each of the five
petals deeply cut.
Leaves in pairs, small,
usually not stalked.
Pink Family.

HABITAT: Lawns, gardens,
around dwellings,
waste ground,
roadsides, railroads

LOCATION: Statewide

COLLECTION: January -
December

USES: Potherb, soup, casse-
role, salad



Chickweed is a remarkable plant. It has the ability to remain above ground all winter; it therefore yields an edible source year 'round. Chickweed is often a nuisance in the yard, but it pulls out very easily as the roots are shallow, thin and loose. Surprising that it survives all winter, isn't it?

The young tips of the stems are used raw in salad, boiled alone are a spinach substitute or added to a mess of spring greens. As a spinach, you may apply butter generously or season with bacon crumbs and vinegar after a short boiling period with only a small amount of water.

I've had very satisfactory results substituting chickweed in a spinach rice casserole. This is delicious and fancy enough for any dinner party. Add all of the following ingredients to a greased casserole: 1 cup bouillon, 1 cup water, 1½ t minced onion (wild, perhaps), ½ t salt, dash pepper, 1 cup fresh chickweed, ½ cup rice, ½ stick oleo, ¼ cup grated cheddar cheese. Bake at 325 degrees for 45 minutes for a taste bud treat!

Chickweed also makes an interesting addition to a dish of scrambled eggs. Just add the chickweed to the egg batter along with 1½ T Durkee's dressing, salt and pepper. The result is scrambled eggs chickweed style.

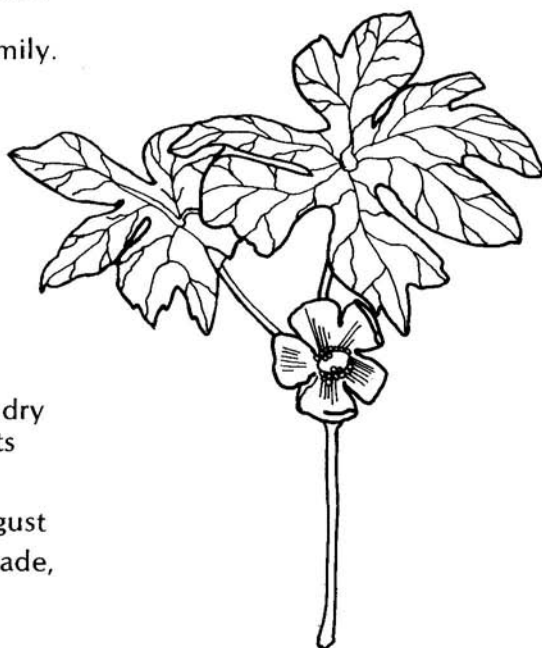
One of the favorite ways to prepare chickweed for my family is to make a soup. Add a cup of chickweed to 4 cups of milk, 4 T chopped onion, 3 T corn starch, 2 T butter, salt and pepper. It is delicious. Now, get the chickweed out of your yard and onto the table!!!



MAYAPPLE (*Podophyllum peltatum*)

FLOWERS: April - May

DESCRIPTION: Bare stem topped with large, palmate leaves. The one or two leaves look like umbrellas. Forked stem of the two-leaved plant produces a single flower. Barberry Family.



HABITAT: Low moist or dry open woods, thickets

LOCATION: Statewide

COLLECTION: July - August

USES: Fruit, pie, marmalade, jelly, drink

CAUTION: See page 217

Early spring finds the mayapple spiraling up to form a forest floor of umbrella plants. The plant has either one leaf or it forks midway on the stem producing two leaves. It is the double-leaf plant that flowers and produces the mayapple, or wild lemon as it is often called.

This is an easily acquired fruit. It gets about the size of a small lemon and falls to the ground. While the golden brown tones easily camouflage into the forest floor, once the plant is located, the fruits will be almost directly under it. The raw fruit has a thick flesh that surrounds the many seeds and is particularly sweet.

A chiffon pie made from the raw pulp was fairly good, but takers were not overly eager. The pie was greatly improved by first cooking the mayapple, putting the pulp through a colander and using the same recipe as follows: Cook 40-45 mayapples for 1½ cups of pulp. Add ¾ cup sugar to pulp and let stand 20 minutes. Soften 1 envelope unflavored gelatin in ¼ cup cold water then dissolve the mixture in ½ cup hot water. Cool and add the mayapple mixture, 1 T lemon juice, and a dash of salt. Chill until partially set. Fold in a package of whipped cream, pour into a graham cracker crust and chill thoroughly.

Mayapples make a very tasty greenish-yellow marmalade. Cut off both flowering and stem end of the mayapple and quarter into a large pan. Simmer for 15 minutes and use a colander to get the pulp. For two cups of thick pulp, add ½ package of Sure-Jell and 2¾ cups of sugar. When the mixture boils and thickens, pour it into jars and seal.

A good jelly which is excellent to serve with venison or mutton is made by adding green food coloring and mint with the mayapple for a mint jelly.

A good drink may be had by peeling and chunking the mayapples into a large bowl. Add sugar and let the mixture set to draw out the juice. Mash the mixture and run it through the colander. Now, add a jigger of this liquid to a glass of lemonade for a pleasant iced beverage. Other friends prefer to add half of the juice to a half portion of grape wine and I must admit it's not bad that way at all!

The rest of this attractive plant is reported to be poisonous and best left alone. The Indians used the root, however, as a medicine.

It's a shame to see this fruit fall and rot. The animals seem to enjoy the mayapple, why not you and I?